

THE *New Creature*

Described and considered, as the **SURE CHARACTER**
of a Man's being in **CHRIST**.

Together with some

Seasonable Advice to those who are **NEW CREATURES**

A

S E R M O N

Preached at the *Boston THURSDAY-LECTURE*, *June 4. 1741*
and made publick at the general Desire of the Hearers.

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If any Man be in Christ he is a new Creature, by this Rule
all the Titles and Claims made to Christ in the professing
World are to be examined. *If any Man*, be he what he
will, high or low, great or small, learned or illiterate,
young or old; this is the Standard by which he must be
judged: *If he be in Christ he is a new Creature*, and
if he be not a *new Creature*, he is not *in Christ*, let his
Endowments, Gifts, Confidence and Reputation be what
it will. *Mr. Flavel, Vol. I. of his Works, p. 344.*



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T H E
New Creature
D E L I N E A T E D.

2 COR. V. 17.

Therefore, if any man be IN CHRIST, he is a NEW CREATURE: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new.

VARIOUS are the Figures under which the Scripture represents that Change which is wrought in Men, when they are made true Christians. In the Text, 'tis spoken of, under the Metaphor of a *new creature*. *If any man be IN CHRIST, he is a new Creature.*—*If any man be in Christ.* That is, say some, if any Man be in the Kingdom of Christ; if any Man lives under the Gospel-dispensation, *he is a new creature*; he is in a new creation: In which, as it follows in the next Words, *old things are past away*; an End is put to the former State of
A Things

Things, the old Dispensation, the Jewish Oeconomy. *Behold all things are become new*; another Administration, a new State of things is introduced and set up. The Apostle is supposed to have spoken to this Purpose, 'If any Man lives under the Gospel, he is under a quite new Dispensation, a Dispensation in which he has nothing to do with the Jewish Oeconomy; that old State of Things is done away; he is, as it were, in another Creation, under a State of Affairs anew erected by God.' But others put another Sense on the Words.

If any Man be in Christ, i. e. as the Branches are in the Vine, if any Man be united to Christ; if any Man be a true and real Christian, *he is a new Creature*, i. e. another Man: He is as it were again form'd and fashion'd. *Old things are past away*, i. e. the old Man, the carnal Heart, with all its corrupt Affections and evil Passions; *behold all things are become new*; the Man has a new Heart, a new turn of Mind, and he leads a new Life. Agreeably the Subject which bespeaks your Attention is this,

The true Christian is a new Creature.

So he is every where affirmed to be, in the Writings of the new Testament; nor otherwise might he expect admission into the coming and eternal Kingdom of God: For as the inspired Paul declares *, *Circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision; but the new Creature*; that is to say, in the Dispensation by Jesus Christ, the new Creature is that with which nothing else will avail to our having Entrance into Heaven: But the Question here before us is,

Why is the true Christian called a new Creature?

And in general, he is thus called on account of that great Change which Christianity makes in him. Indeed, physically speaking, no Alteration is effected, either in the Powers of his Soul or Body, but in the moral and religious Sense a change is wrought in him; and this so great, that he is a quite different sort of Man, so unlike to what he was, that he is not unfitly still'd a new Creature.

But it will not be amiss, if I am a little particular in describing this Change; which, that I may speak more clearly, I shall consider under two distinct Heads.

I. As it respects the *inward Frame of the Mind*. And

II. *The outward Course and Manner of Life*.

I. I am to consider this Change, on account whereof the

* Gal. vi. 15.

true Christian is term'd a new Creature, in respect of his inward Frame of Mind. And this is what the Scripture is very express in taking notice of; yea, and the Metaphors it uses to set forth the Greatness of this Change, are peculiarly strong and forcible. 'Tis compared to a *new Heart*; to a *new Spirit*; to a *Renovation in the Spirit of the Mind*; to a *transformation by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*; to a *being sanctified throughout in Soul and Spirit*. These Phrases do all mean one and the same thing, and point our Thoughts to that Change which is made in the Minds of Men by Christianity, and 'tis indeed an universal Change: Their whole inner Man is altered, insomuch that they have neither the same Apprehensions, nor Resolutions, nor Affections: They neither love, nor grieve, nor hope, nor fear, as they used to do. We shall be particular here.

1. There is a Change in their Apprehensions: They see Things in another Light, have other Thoughts, different Sentiments from what they used to have.

They had once a notional Sight only of the Being and Perfections of God; his Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Mercy were Matters rather of speculative Opinion than real Belief: But now they see these Things in quite another Manner; they are struck with a full Conviction of their certain Truth; they appear to them the surest Realities; that is the inward Sense and Feeling of their Mind; verily there is a God who judgeth in the Earth, and he is a Being infinitely just and holy, and wise and good.

They once saw no Beauty in Christ, nor were sensible of any need they stood in of him; but he is now altogether lovely, the most desirable Person to them of any in Heaven or Earth; and they see him to be the *one thing needful*; that they can't do without him; that they are undone, remedilessly undone, unless interested in him.

They once saw no great Evil in Sin, but it now appears an evil and bitter thing; they are ready to wonder at themselves, they had formerly such light Thoughts of it, they now see it to be so vile and accursed a thing, carrying in its Nature so much Baseness and Ingratitude, so much Contempt of God and Rebellion against his divine Majesty; besides, that it has laid them open to the Threatnings of the Almighty, exposing them to Death and Hell, the Miseries both of the present, and the coming and eternal World.

They once saw no great Beauty in Holiness, nor Necessity to become possessors of it; but it now appears the most a-

miable Grace, what reflects the greatest Lustre on those who are the Subjects of it, making them the most excellent in the Earth; and they are convinced that Holiness is the grand Qualification for Happiness, that there is no such thing as enjoying the latter without the former, neither in consistence with the Appointment of the Gospel, or the Frame of their own Nature.

In a word, they have now quite other Thoughts of Heaven and Hell, and the coming and eternal Judgment; nor indeed do any of the Truths of Religion appear to them as they once did: In their former State they had some Notion about them, but it was a dark, customary, insufficient Apprehension; whereas now they see them as they never did before, more clearly and fully, and so as to be convinced and affected. They have now a spiritual discerning of the Truths of God and Religion, their Conceptions of them are strong and lively; they see them to be undoubted Realities of infinite and everlasting Importance; such a Change is there in the Apprehensions of Men when they are made new Creatures.

2. There is as great a Change in their Purposes, these are not now as they once were; once the Bent of their Mind was towards the Earth, it is now towards Heaven; once they were resolved for Sin, determined to pursue those Lusts which war against the Soul; but this is now the Purpose of their Heart, *that which I see not teach thou me; if I have done Iniquity, I will do no more* *. Once, it may be, they had some faint Wishes or feeble Resolutions towards God, and the Ways of God; but their Purposes are now lively and vigorous, and able to withstand Difficulty and Opposition. Once they could come into good Resolutions, only in a time of Sicknes and Danger, or when their Consciences were alarmed, and their Affections put into a Commotion; but their religious Purposes are now fixed and settled. The habitual Turn of their Mind is towards another World, and they are as truly determined for God and Holiness, as they formerly were for Sin and Lust; in a word, their Eyes having been opened to see the Force of the great Motives of Christianity, their Stubborness has hereby been overcome, and a thorough Change effected in the Purposes of their Heart. They now approve of the Method of Salvation by a crucified Jesus, they now consent to the Law as just, and holy,

* Job xxxiv. 32.

and good, and do, in the Resolves of their Souls, unfeignedly deliver themselves up to God in Christ, to be governed and saved by him.

3. There is a Change in their Affections, and it is an entire one; it is not confined to this or the other Affection, but extends to them all. They are all altered; that is, either the Objects of them are changed, or the Manner and Degree of their Exercise. It will be needful to come to Particulars here.

1. There is a Change in their Love, they do not love as they used to do: Once they had no Love to Holiness, nor for those who were holy; they rather hated than loved Holiness, wherever, and in whomsoever they beheld it: This vitious vain World was the great Object of their Love; on this was their Heart set; here lay their Happiness; nothing did they value in compare herewith; but being created anew, the Case is strangely altered with them; they now comparatively hate what they once so passionately loved; not the Things of the World, but the Things of God and Christ are now the chief Object of their Delight; their Love is now to the Day, and Worship, and Word of God; and they delight in his Law, so as that it is their *meditation both in the day and in the night*: In one short Word, the blessed God, and not this vain World, is now the supreme Object of their Love and Desire; insomuch that that is a just Description of the real Sense and feeling of their Minds, * *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* And whereas their chief Enquiry once was, *Who shall shew us any good?* any worldly, temporal, sensual good, that is now their Cry, *Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy countenance upon us*; for this will put gladness in our Hearts, *more than in the time when our corn and our wine increased*.

2. There is a Change in their Sorrow, this is different now from what it formerly was: The Things which once moved their Grief were Disappointments in their Business, worldly Losses and Crosses, Pain in their Bodies, injurious treatment of their Names, and the like; these were the things which called forth their Sorrow, and these were the only Things which did so. As for their Sins, they were not grieved on account of them; it was no Matter of Uneasiness to them that they were out of favour with God; that they had no Interest in Christ, nor in the everlasting Pun-

* Psal. lxxiii. 25. † Psal. iv. 6, 7.

chases of his Blood; yea they were in no Distress about the Curse of the Law and the Wrath of God, nor was the intolerable Weight of Guilt which lay on them any Burden at all to them; they knew no Sorrow but on outward Accounts; and if in this Respect all Things went well, they were then easy, however poor, and naked, and wretched, and miserable they were, in regard of their Souls, and spiritual and eternal good Things: But now the *new Creation* has wonderfully turned the Channel of their Sorrow; they are now grieved for their Sins; they are now in Distress if they enjoy not a Sense of God's Favour; they now mourn they are no better Christians, no more like to God, no more conformed to the Example of Christ, and the Precepts of his Gospel; yea the Infirmities and Frailties they are guilty of, in common with all good Men, are the Occasion of no small Trouble to them; they lament the Imperfection of their Nature, the *sin that dwelleth in them*, and breathe out their Complaints to God in the Language of the holy Apostle Paul, *O wretched-men that we are, who shall deliver us from this body of sin and death* *?

3. There is a Change in their Hope; this they once placed on the Creature, but they now place it on the Creator; they once hoped for nothing better than the good Things of Time; but now they hope for the better Things of Eternity; they had once no Views beyond this Earth, but they now reach to Heaven; or if in their former State they had an Expectation of better Things than this World can afford, it was a vain fond Hope; if they looked for Peace, it was in that way in which God has said, *there is no peace*; if they trusted they should go to Heaven, it was in the Way which leads to Death and Hell; their Hope was like that of the Hypocrite, concerning which the Holy Ghost says, *it shall perish*; whereas they have now a Hope that is well founded; they hope for the Enjoyment of the unseen Things of the eternal World, and their Hope is of that sort, which will neither deceive nor make them ashamed; for it is a Hope built on the divine Promises, all which in Christ are *yea and amen to the glory of God*.

4. There is a Change in their Fear; the things which once moved their Fear, were the Threats of Men, the Frowns of the World, and those outward Evils they were exposed to and in Danger of, and these only had an Influence to stir

* Rom. vii. 24.

up their Fear: As for GOD, his *Fear was not before their Eyes*, nor, if they were told of the coming Day of the Lord's Vengeance, had it any Effect to awaken their Conscience; or, if at times their Fears were excited, they were of no long Continuance, nor had any lasting Prevalence on them, to restrain from that *fornication and uncleanness, that inordinate affection, and evil concupiscence, and covetousness; for which things sake cometh the wrath of God on the Children of Disobedience*: But, being created anew, 'tis quite otherwise with them; they are now possess'd of an habitual Awe of the Divine Majesty, and fear God's Displeasure more than every thing else. They dare not now live in Sin, their Fear of God won't suffer them to do so, it is a powerful and effectual Restraint to them, from every thing that is offensive to him.

3. In fine, there is a Change in their Anger: They were once angry with those who were a Hindrance to them in Sin; but they now love and thank them; they could not once bear to be told of their evil Deeds, but now they take nothing more kindly: They once counted those their Enemies, and treated them with Anger and Clamour, who were so good as to reprove, rebuke and admonish them in the Lord; but they now esteem them their best Friends, and speak of them with the highest Respect and Reverence: *If the righteous smite them, 'tis now a kindness; and if they reprove them, 'tis an excellent oil, which breaketh not their Head.*

But more than this, their Anger is now turned against themselves; yea, they are more angry with themselves for committing Sin, than they formerly were with others, for reproving them for Sin: They are now full of Indignation against themselves; hence the Apostle, speaking of the Fruits of godly Sorrow for Sin, breaks out in that Language, *Behold what carefulness it wrought in you?—Yea what indignation? Yea what revenge?*

Such a Change now as this, so great and universal, extending even to the *whole inner Man*, is effected in Men when they are made true Christians; and is it any Wonder if, on this account, they are spoken of in the Text as *new Creatures*?

II. But 'tis time that I now come, in the second place, to consider this Change in respect of Mens *outward Course and Manner of Life*, And the Change in their Lives is as

great as the Change in their Hearts; their manner of Behaviour is so unlike to what it was, so new and different, that they don't appear the same Persons, and one would scarce take them to be the same.

They don't now live in Sin as they once did, but, as the Apostle speaks, *have put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful Lusts* † or as the same Apostle more fully expresses it, they have *put off all these, Anger, Wrath, Malice, Blasphemy, filthy Communication out of their Mouth* ‡; and they lie not to one another: Neither do they allow themselves in any way of Wickedness whatever. They walk not now according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind; neither do they fashion themselves according to their former Lusts, when they were in their Ignorance. They have left their old sinful Practices; and will not now, upon any terms commit these Follies they were once free to indulge themselves in. It might perhaps be once said of one and another of them, they would curse and swear; they would drink to Excess, they would commit Fornication and Uncleaness, they would lie, oppress and defraud their Neighbour: But none of these things can now be said of them; they have quitted these Vices, and are not the Men they us'd to be. If they were Drunkards, they no longer walk in rioting and drunkenness; if they were common Swearers, they are now afraid to take the Name of the Lord their God in vain; if they were once given to Uncleaness, abstain from fleshly Lusts which war against the Soul: And so whatever the Sins were which they once lived in the Commission of, they have now forsaken them for ever.

And this Reformation which is made in their Manners, is sometimes so remarkable, that 'tis taken notice of, and admired at by others: They are ready to wonder, when they see the Alteration there is in their Course of Life, how much they are mended and reformed. Thus it is particularly, when great and scandalous Sinners; those who have long lived in Sin, and in the Commission of open and heinous Sins, are wrought upon by the Grace of God, and become true Christians. Marvellous is the Change that appears in their manner of Life; so many Vices are abandoned, so many Sins are renounced; and these of so black a Nature, that they look not like the same Persons: Yea,

† Eph iv. 22. ‡ Col. iii. 8, 9.

they are so unlike to what they were in their former State; that they may, with all Propriety, be called *new Creatures*. But in respect of all that are made true Christians, whether they were great or small Sinners, whether they had continued in Sin a shorter or longer time, there is a Change in their Course of Life; their Manners are reformed; nor otherwise may it be said of them, that they are new Creatures. No one that was a new Creature ever lived in his old Course of Sin; the new Creation always effects a Change in the outward Behaviour: All former Sins are put off, hence you may observe, the Scripture Calls to Conversion in such Language as that, *Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; Amend your ways and your doings; cast away from you your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed; Let the Wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his Thoughts.*

But this Change in the outward Course of Life carries more in it than what is negative; 'tis a Change not only from Sin, but to Holiness: Those who are created anew, not only amend their Ways and Doings, but obey the Voice of the Lord: They not only *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, they live soberly, righteously and godly in the world*; that is, they live in the Practice of the whole of their Duty; all that they owe, either to God, their Neighbour, or themselves.

They do their Duty to God; they are Men of Piety and Devotion: Once they restrained Prayer, but now they make a business of it. 'Tis observable, the first thing said of Christ after his Conversion is that, *Behold he prayeth* †. And the same may be said of all that are created in Christ; they are now Men of Prayer; they delight in the Duty, and are diligent in the Practice of it; and they pray with all Prayer, daily in their Closets, praying to their Father in Heaven, *as he seeth in secret, but rewardeth openly*. And they uphold Prayer in their Families, every Day taking care, that their Morning and Evening Sacrifice ascend up to God as the perpetual Burnt-offering.

Nor are they content with these more private Duties of Piety, but are always to be seen in the Beauty of Holiness, where they attend the Solemnities of publick Worship, with solemnity and Gravity, and as becomes those who have in their Minds an awaken'd Sense of spiritual and eternal things.

And singular is the Respect which they express to the Lord's Day; they *remember to keep it holy*. 'Tis their serious Endeavour to sanctify this Day of God: And as they religiously separate themselves from the World; so they spend the time in the Service of God, and those holy Exercises that are proper to this Day, which is set apart for the Purposes of Piety and Religion.

In one Word, 'tis their daily constant Endeavour to express the inward Affection and Reverence they bear towards the Divine Majesty in all the Ways that are just and proper, behaving themselves towards him with all Humility and dutiful Submission. Thus they do their Duty to God.

And, in like manner, they do their Duty to their Neighbour: This they had once no Concern about, only as might serve their own Interest; but they now make it Matter of Religion and Conscience: Accordingly, having put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the Image of him that created him, they have put on all bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another: And above all these things, they have put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. They now consider themselves as made of the same Blood with other Men; yet as still more nearly allied in Christ, being all Brethren. They are not therefore content with speaking the Truth to their Neighbour, with doing him Justice in their Concern with him, abstaining from all the Methods of Fraud and Deceit; they think it not enough to put away from them bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and evil-speaking, with all malice; but they are kindly affectioned to each other, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep. They are courteous, pitiful, tender-hearted, full of Love and good-will; ready to assist, and do all good Offices, not only to Relatives and Friends, but to all Men. And when they have Opportunity, especially to the Household of Faith. And what the Gospel is more than ordinary expresses, in, they can put up Affronts, pass by Injuries, forgive Offences, and do good to Enemies.

And as they do their Duty to God and their Neighbour, so they practice it in regard of themselves; they are now sober and chaste; they remember they have Souls as well as Bodies; and accordingly take care not to indulge the latter to the prejudice of the former. They therefore mortify the members that are on the earth, fornication, uncleanness,

ordinate affection, evil-concupiscence: And ever make it their care to conduct themselves by the great Gospel-rule of Temperance and Sobriety. They neither eat nor drink, nor lie up to play, nor allow themselves in any inferior Gratification, but within such Bounds and Limits, as will consist with the Prescriptions of Christianity. In one Word, in all unusual Indulgences, they be oft in mind, that they are Men and not Bruits: yea, that they are new Men, and so behave themselves soberly, as becomes reasonable and religious creatures.

Such a Change as this does Christianity make in the Lives of those who are its real Professors; and a most glorious change it is; more especially in regard of those who have been under the Restraints of a religious Education, but have walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom they have had their conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind. O what a Difference is there in the Lives of this kind of Persons! 'Tis even wonder'd by all that knew them. Light is not more contrary to Darkness, nor Heaven to Hell, than the Lives of these Persons now are to what they once were. They are, in the general course of their Lives, quite another sort of Men; they may properly be called new Creatures.

And thus you have seen the true Import of the Metaphor in the Text, by a brief but distinct and full Description of the Change, on account whereof, the Stile of *new creature* is applied to the true Christian.

Several other things might properly be considered upon this Subject; as the Maker of the new Creature, the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD; the Necessity of the new Creature, both in the appointment of the Gospel Covenant, and the Constitution of the Nature of Man; the Means and Manner of the new Creature's Formation: But each of these, to do Justice to them, would require a Discourse by itself; for which reason, I shall wholly pass them over at present, and come to the Application, which indeed is the chief thing I had in view in the choice of the Text. And,

We collect, from the preceeding Discourse, that, by the new Creature the Scripture means something very different from what many are apt to imagine. It does not here mean a bare Profession of Christianity, in Opposition to Paganism; it does not hereby mean a meer Change in the outward

outward Behaviour; much less a Change from these or those particular Sins, arising only from a Change of Age or Condition in Life: It does not hereby mean a going over from one Opinion to another, or from one Party of Christians to another: It does not hereby mean the Restraints of Education or Conscience, nor yet, the being now and then in a Commotion from our Affections and Passions: I say, the Scripture, by the *new creature*, does not mean such things as these, no, but something far more great and excellent: It hereby means that glorious Change, whereby Men are *turned from darkness to light*; whereby, of Slaves to divers Lusts and Pleasures, they are made the Servants of God and Righteousness. It means that Change, whereby, instead of the Image of the Devil, Men become Partakers of the Nature of God, a Likeness to the Divine Being, in Holiness and true Righteousness. Such a Change as this is introduced into Men's Frame by the new Creation; they are, as it were a new Workmanship of God; they are so universally altered, that they are not miscalled *new Creatures*.

2. We are taught from what has been said, the Excellency of the new Creation. Hereby the Ruins of the old are repaired, the Image of God reinstamp'd upon the Soul, and the Confusion and Disorder among its Faculties set to rights. Light is put into the Understanding, the Will made pliant and ductile, the Affections are placed on their proper Objects, the Passions calm and quiet, the Conscience serene and placid, and the Life uniform and regular, conformed to the Will of God, and the Precepts of Religion. O what a glorious Change is this! How enobled are those, who have been thus *created again in Christ Jesus*? None among the meer Sons of *Adam*, however dignified and exalted on other Accounts, are to be compared with them: They are *the Excellent in the Earth*; they bear a near Resemblance to perfected Spirits and glorious Angels; yea, in some Proportion, they are living Images of the blessed God, and of his only begotten Son, our Saviour *Jesus Christ*. And what can be said that will reflect greater Glory on them?

3. We have reason to fear, from what has been offered, there are but few who may be pronounced new Creatures. Many indeed lay claim to this Character; but how few upon solid Grounds, can make good their Pretences? How few, alas! have had Experience of a real and effectual change, both in Heart and Life! O how many are there of whom it may be said, They are changed from Childhood to

Youth; from Youth to Manhood, from Manhood to Age, and the old Nature still remains in its full Strength; yea, and the Body of Death is more vigorous than twenty or thirty Years ago! O what Multitudes are changed for the worse instead of the better! are daily growing more loose and prophane, more earthly and sensual, more vicious in their Morals, and universally debauch'd in their Conversations? And can it be said of such, that they are new Creatures? They have nothing in them that is new; they remain altogether unaltered, unless it be, that their Nature is more changed into that of the Devil.

And, even among the Professors of Religion, how few may be reckoned among those who are so changed as that they are *new Men*? There may, it is true, be a Change of Language in some, a Change of Looks and Gestures in others, a Change in mere outward Appearance in still others; but how few are effectually turned from the Love and Practice of Sin, to the Love and Practice of Holiness? In here and there one we may behold the Image of God and the Life of Religion; but O how many heartless Christians are there! how many who have the Name of God in their Mouths, but the Image of Satan on their Hearts? Are there not many who have no other Christianity but what consists with their Vices? who are Christians by Name, but very pagans in their Deeds? and, among the Multitudes who profess to have Faith in Christ, how few have any other than that *dead faith*, of which the Apostle *James* says, *it profiteth not*? Must it not be said of most Christians, that their *faith is without works*? a Faith that does not produce those fruits of Righteousness, which by Jesus Christ are to the praise of the Glory of God? And what shall we say of such Christians? Shall we allow that they are *new Creatures*? by no means; for whatever their Hopes and Claims are, they are yet in their Sins, unsanctified by the Grace of God. O the Smallness of the Number of *new Creatures*! The old Creation is of vastly greater Extent than the new. Among the Multitudes who are the natural Workmanship of God, there are but few who are his Workmanship *created again in Christ Jesus*. Here and there a Man, a Woman, a Child, is *new-formed*; but for the Bulk of Mankind, they remain as they were, unrenewed in their Minds, unchanged in their Lives. A melancholy Truth this! it should deeply affect our Hearts.

4. We have here a Rule by which we may make trial of
our

our State. Some perhaps are at no Loss about their Character; they know at once, without bringing the Matter to trial, that they are not *in Christ*; they are self-condemned; their Consciences witness against them; and this, it may be feared, is the Case of a great many. And can you be easy in such a State? You have infinite Reason for Disquietude of Soul; and were but your Eyes opened to see your Misery and Danger, you would wonder at your own Stupidity. As you are *out of Christ*, you are out of favour with God, under Condemnation by his holy Law, yea *the wrath of God abideth on you*: You every Moment ly open to Destruction from God's Presence, and the Glory of his Power: There is nothing betwixt you and the Place of Blackness of Darkness but a poor frail uncertain Life; you hang, as it were, over the bottomless Pit by the slender Thread of Life, and the Moment that snaps asunder you sink down into Perdition. And is this a Condition to be secure in? Are you easy in Hazards of infinitely less Importance? and shall this be the only one wherein you act as though you were perfectly stupid? Shall your Fears be alarmed upon the Prospect of inconsiderable temporal Evils, and not at all awakened when your Souls and their everlasting Well-being are at an infinite Risque? O the monstrous Infatuation you are under! *Who hath bewitched you*, O Sinners, that you are thus lost to all Sense of your own Safety and Interest? Be convinced of your Danger; you are certainly in a State of dreadful and amazing Hazard; you are the Persons marked out, as it were by Name, in the Revelations of God, for an Exclusion from the Kingdom of Heaven; and if you live and die in your present Condition, you will surely be made miserable without Mercy or Remedy. 'Tis no Tale I am now telling you, no, but *the very truth of the true and faithful God*; O realise it to be so, and awake out of your Security. Awake thou that sleepest, and call on thy God; O cry mightily unto God, unto God most high! perhaps he will hear your Cry, pity your miserable Case, and send you Help from his holy Habitation.

But besides the Persons I have been speaking to, there are others who may be at a real Loss to know their just Character God-ward; they may be under Fears and Doubts whether they are good Christians, and would be glad to be put upon a Method of Trial, whereby they might come to know themselves whether *Christ Jesus be in them*, or they are *Re-*

probates, Counterfeits, disallowed of God. To such I would say,

You have in the Text a Rule, by which, if you try yourselves, and engage the divine Spirit with you in the Trial, you may come to a clear and satisfactory Knowledge of the real State of your Case. If you are *new Creatures*, you are good Christians, you are in Christ, united to him, interested in him, and in all the eternal Blessings laid up in the Promises of the Gospel-covenant. Bring yourselves then to the Trial. Put the Question to your own Soul, Have I had Experience of such a Change, as that I can esteem myself a *new Creature*? Have I indeed been *transformed by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*? How is it with my Apprehensions? Have I the same Views, the same Thoughts, the same Sentiments of Things that I always had? or do I see Things in another and different Light? What are my Thoughts of sin? does it seem a slight Thing, or an accursed Evil? What are my Thoughts of Holiness? do I entertain a low Opinion of it? or does it appear a Matter infinitely reasonable and important? What are my Thoughts of Christ? do I see no Beauty in him for which he should be desired? or does he appear altogether lovely? Can I, in my own Apprehension, do without him? or do I see the need, the absolute need I stand in of him, and that there is no other Name given under Heaven among Men whereby I can be saved? And how is it with my Purposes? which am I determined for, this World or another? Is my Resolution for God and Christ, and Heaven and Holiness, a sudden, accidental, transient Business, or the settled, permanent, habitual Purpose of my Heart? And how is it with my Affections? on what are they placed? and after what Manner are they exercised? Whom do I love most, God or the World? Which do I fear most, the Anger of God, or outward Losses and Crosses? What grieves me most, the Frowns of the World, or the want of God's Favour? Which do I place my Hope most in, the Things of Time, or the Things of Eternity? And how is it as to my Life and Manners? have I put off the former Conversation, which was according to deceitful Lusts? or do I still fulfil the Desires of the Flesh and of the Mind? Have I renounced my Sins, all my Sins, my most beloved Sins? or do I still keep them? and if I have turned from Sin, to whom have I turned? have I turned to God in Christ? and is it my daily constant Endeavour to live to God? What is my Course and Manner

Manner of Life? is it conducted by the Will of God? Is it conformed to the Example of Christ? Is it a just Transcript of the Precepts of the Gospel? Am I pious towards God? Am I righteous towards Men? Am I sober in respect of myself?

These, my Brethren, are Questions of no small Weight, you may determine your Character by them. If you are able, upon a thorough Survey of your Hearts and Lives, to say, you have had Experience of such a Change as this, you are then in Christ, interested in all the glorious Purchases of his Cross, nor need you be in any Doubt about the Matter.

But I have not experienced, may the concerned Christian say, I have not experienced those Agonies and Convulsions of Soul which others have felt. When I converse with my Christian Friends and Neighbours, I find the Terrors of the Lord have set themselves in array against them; a Sense of Sin and Wrath has been so powerfully impressed on them, that they have been driven almost to Despair; I cannot pretend to such Experience as this, and it fills me with Fear and Solicitude. To such I would say,

Perhaps you were sanctified from Children. This, I doubt not, is sometimes the Case, and might oftner be so, if Parents were more generally faithful in the religious Education of their Children; and if you were so happy as to be wrought upon by the Grace of God in your early Childhood, is it any Wonder you have not been surprised with those Terrors which some others may have experienced?

Or, it may be, you were early under Restraints from Sin, and had, from your first Remembrance, serious Thoughts of God and Religion; a clear Perception of the Ugliness of Sin, the Beauty of Holiness, the Necessity of Christ, and that you could not possibly be saved without an Interest in him. And can it be thought strange if such Persons as you are have not been amazed with those Horrors which have been awakened in the Minds of stupid Sinners?

Besides, there is a vast Difference between the Character of Sinners. Some have such *rotten hearts*, under a goodly *outward Appearance*, and have so long habituated themselves to serve the Devil, under the *Cloak of a religious Profession*, or have openly done so, without seeking for a Disguise, that they are *seven fold more the Children of Hell* than others. And if, in proportion to the greater Guilt of these Sinners, they are more dreadfully distressed from a Sense of Sin, and Fear of the divine Wrath, what is it more than might rea-

sonably

sonably be expected? *Manasseh* was a great Sinner, and he was greatly humbled. *Saul* was a bloody Persecutor, and on this Account, as he himself acknowledges, the chief of Sinners*; and he was struck blind, and continued so for three days without eating or drinking; all which time he is thought to have been in deep Distress of Soul from a Conviction of Sin. And it is perfectly analogous to the best Judgment we are able to make of Things, that the greatest Sinners should be under the greatest Sorrows, in order to their Conversion. I do not say it is always thus, there may be a Variety even here; but this, I believe, is generally the Case.

Moreover, there is a great Difference in Sinners as to their natural Tempers: Some, from their original Contexture, are of a steady, firm Disposition, not apt to be moved easily or suddenly, not to any remarkable Degree; whereas, on the other hand, others are of a more soft, facile Temper; are more readily wrought upon, and sooner put into Commotion, and into a greater one too, from their Passions and Affections. And, according to this Difference in the natural Make of Sinners, must there not be a Difference also in the sensible Expressions of their Concern for Sin? Should we suppose upon their Minds an equally clear and strong Perception of Sin and Misery, it is indeed impossible but that, according to the Difference of their natural Temper, there should be a Difference in their Distress, as to the passionate or sensitive Part of it.

Furthermore, 'Some, as Mr. Guthrie † expresses it, are brought in to Christ in a sovereign Gospel Way, when the Lord, by some few Words of Love, swallowing up any Law-work, quickly taketh a Person Prisoner at the first, as he did *Zacharias*, *Luke* xix. 19. and others, who, upon a Word spoken by Christ, did leave all and follow him: And we hear no Noise of a Law-work dealing with them before they close with Jesus Christ.' I do not affirm this is generally the Case, but I doubt not it sometimes is, and I am perswaded I speak the real Experience of some very good Christians, while I say they have been more moved by a Representation of the Loveliness, than of the Majesty of God. A Display of the Terrors of the Law have not

* 1 Tim. i. 15. † See his excellent Book intitled, *The Trial of a saving Interest in Christ*, Page 23, 24.

had any powerful Influence on them; but when the *Mercy of the Gospel, the Mercy, the Loving-kindness of God towards Men in Jesus Christ*; has been opened to their View, it has melted their Hearts, dissolved them into Grief and Shame, and been an effectual Preparative to their saving Closure with Christ, as the alone Saviour of the lost World.

But it ought to be remembred still further, when Persons are under Convictions, they are the same weak, frail, imperfect Creatures they were before; and it no doubt sometimes happens, that the Work of Conviction, where it is really begun by the Spirit of God, is yet carried on to an undesirable Excess, through the Frailty of the Subject, either from Indisposition of Body, natural Weakness of Understanding, Ignorance of the Gospel, or Mistakes about the Fulness and Freeness of that Provision which is made in Christ for the Help of poor distressed Sinners: And this perhaps is always the Case where the Concern is carried to so great a Height, as to discompose the Mind, and unfit the Man to exert himself, in the reasonable Exercise of his Powers, about the Affairs of Salvation; or, when it leads to Despair, to undervalue the Grace of God and the Merits of the Redeemer, as though they were insufficient for them.

In one plain short Word, the great thing you have to get satisfied about is, whether you are the Subjects of that Change, which will, in the Estimation of the Gospel, denominate you *new Creatures*. All that are Christians in Reality and Truth agree in this, that they are *not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of their Minds*: But in what is previous or preparatory to this there is a Latitude, and so great a one, that there are but few Christians whose Experiences are just alike. If some have been speedily wrought upon, and fashioned into a Workmanship of God, others have had the same thing done for them in a more slow and leisurely Way. If some have been exercised with great Terrors of Conscience, strong Agonies and Convulsions of Soul, others have been recovered to God in a more mild, and kind, and gentle Manner. If some have been under a stated, perceptible and distinct Course of Operations from the Spirit of God, others have been dealt with in a more insensible and variously interrupted Way. The great thing necessary is, to experience a real and effectual Renovation of Heart and Life, and as to the Way and Manner how this, by the divine Spirit, was brought about, it is not of so great Importance; nor is it of any Importance whether the Spirit of God has

gone on in just the same Method with you which he has taken with some others; be rather concerned about the thing, than the Way in order to it; get satisfied you have been thus wrought upon, and you need be at no further Pains.

Let me add here for your further Satisfaction under this Difficulty, the Words of the renownedly pious Mr. *Shepherd* in his *Sound Believer*; says he, ‘ * Some think there is no thorough Conviction without some Affection. I dare not say so.—Let not therefore any Soul be discouraged, and say, I was never yet convinced, because I have not felt such a clear, real, constant Light to see Sin and Death as others have done; consider thou if the End of Conviction be attained, which is a true Sense and feeling of Sin, thou hast then that Measure which is most meet for thee, more than which the Lord regards not in any of his.’ And he gives us his Thoughts concerning this Sense and feeling of Sin a few Pages onwards; ‘ † Do not think that the Lord hath not wrought any true Sense of Sin, because you find it not in such a Measure as you imagine you should desire to have, and that others feel. Sense of Sin admits of Degrees,——Some are educated more civilly than others, and thereby have contracted less Guilt and Stoutness of Heart against God and his Ways; therefore these have not such Cause of Trouble, and, being less rugged, have less need of Axes to hew them. Some Mens Sorrow breaks in upon them more suddenly, like Storms and Breaches of the Sea, and the Lord is resolved to hasten and finish his Work in them more speedily, and it may be more exemplarily; (for every Christian is not a fair Copy) as those in *Acts* ii. 27. In others, their Sorrows soak in by Degrees, *gutta cavat lapidem*, the Lord empties them by continual Droppings, and hence feel not that Measure of Sorrow that others do. Every Christian is not a *Heman*, Psalm lxxxvii. who suffers *distracting fears and terrors from his youth up*, Ver. 15. who is *afflicted with all God’s ways*, Ver. 7.—Some Sense of Sin the Lord will work in all he saves, but not the same Measure. He expresses himself still further upon this Matter in these Words: ‘ ‡ Nor yet, says he, do I press a Necessity of Tears, or violent and tumultuous Complaints; the deepest Sorrows run with the least Noise. If a Man can have Tears for outward Losses,

* Page 33. † Page 49, 50. ‡ Page 79.

' and none for Sins, it is very suspicious whether he was e-
 ' ver truly sorrowful for Sin; otherwise, as the greatest Joys
 ' are not always exprest in Laughter, so the greatest Sorrows
 ' are not always exprest in shedding of Tears.' To which
 let me subjoin the Words of that eminent Man of God Mr.
Willard: ' * God, *says he*, doth by one and the same Act
 ' introduce into the Soul that Principle which is called the
 ' *new Creature*, one principal Member whereof is Faith;
 ' but yet in his Dealings with the Souls of Men about it he
 ' acts not alike in all; and as to the Experiences of graci-
 ' ous Souls, they are various on this Account. Nor is the
 ' Method to be limited to any one's particular Observation
 ' in himself.—In some he makes shorter Work by the means,
 ' others he holds longer under Awakenings, Terrors, &c.
 ' Some are drawn to Christ more gently, others more ter-
 ' ribly, and all this according as he pleaseth: And it will be
 ' a *great Injury to the Souls we are concerned with if we be*
 ' *rigid here.*'

I mean not by what I have cited from these learned and
 pious Writers, or delivered in my own Words, to speak a-
 gainst that Sense of Sin and Wrath which is really needful
 to put Persons upon seeking to obtain Salvation through Je-
 sus Christ, but only to make it appear, that this is various
 in its Degree in different Persons, insomuch that none have
 Reason to call in question the Truth of their Renovation,
 merely because they have not had so great or so long Ter-
 rors as others have felt.

But I do not know, may the perplexed Christian further
 say, I do not know the Time of my Conversion, and it
 gives me considerable Uneasiness; others I meet with, or
 hear of, can mention the precise Time when they suppose
 they were created anew, with many remarkable Circumstan-
 ces relating thereto; but it is not thus with me, and it gives
 me great Disturbance: I am afraid I am not a *new Crea-*
ture.

To such as you I cannot more properly apply myself than
 in the Words of the great and good Dr. *Owen*: ' † He that
 ' is alive may know that he was born, tho' he know neither
 ' the Place where, nor the Time when he was so, and so
 ' may he that is spiritually alive, and hath Ground of Evi-
 ' dence that he is so, that he was *born again*, tho' he know

* See his *Lectures upon the Assembly's Catechism*, Page
 435. † On Psalm cxxx. Page 342.

neither when, nor where, nor how. And this Case, *he goes on*, is usual in Persons of quiet natural Tempers, who have had the Advantage of Education under Means of Light and Grace. God oft-times in such Persons begins and carries on the Work of Grace *insensibly*, so that they come to good Growth and Maturity before they know that they are alive: Such Persons come at length to be satisfied in saying with the blind Man in the Gospel, *How our eyes were opened we know not; only one thing we know, whereas we were blind by nature, now we see.* Very suitable also to Persons in your Case are the Words of holy *Flavel*: * * This marvellous Change, *says he*, (*he had been speaking of the new Creation*) as great and universal as it is, is not alike evident and clearly discernable in all new Creatures; and he adds this as one Reason of it, Because the Work of Grace is wrought in divers Methods and Manners in the People of God: Some are changed from a State of notorious Profaneness into serious Godliness; there the Change is conspicuous and very evident, all the Neighbourhood rings of it; but in others it is more insensibly instilled in their tender Years, by the Blessing of God upon religious Education, and there it is more indiscernible. And very pertinent likewise to the Doubt we are in are the Words of the late President *Wadsworth*, in his *Address for the doubting, and Cordial for the fainting Saint*, in which I scarce know of a more useful Book in its kind: *says he*, * † There are probably but few sincere Christians that can tell the particular Time of their Conversion. *Paul* could tell the very Day he was converted, it was on such Day when he was going to *Damascus* to persecute the Saints; but we do not know that *Peter*, *James* and *John*, knew the particular Day of their Conversion.—It may be a Person has been brought up very ignorantly, and lived scandalously, at length God takes hold of him by his Word and Spirit, fills him with amazing Terrors and Horrors of his Wicked Course of Life, unites him to Christ, works peace in his Soul and a Change in his Practice both at once, or the latter immediately upon the former: Such a one ordinarily can tell how and when he was first brought upon by the Spirit. It may be others had pious Education from their Childhood, have never been left to scandalous Sins; they have (in general speaking) always

1. of his Works, Page 330. † Page 95, 96, 97.

* had

had some Awe of God upon their Souls, some Sense
 the Evil of Sin, and considerable Fear of committing know
 Wickedness, and speedy Remorse and Trouble of Conscience
 if they have done it: Now ordinarily when such
 Persons are converted, they can give the least (or it may
 be no particular Account) of the Time of their Conversion.
 They have had more or less of Convictions, Doubts,
 Fears, Hopes, even from their Childhood: And though
 now they desire heartily to have Christ on his own terms,
 and to be universally holy; yet they can't tell at what
 time this Change was wrought in them. It may be they
 now know, that they sincerely fear God; but they don't
 know when this begun in them: Nor can they say, whether
 their parental Instruction, reading God's Word, or hearing
 it preached, was firstly instrumental of saving Good to their
 Souls. So that though some Persons thus piously educated
 may possibly know the particular Time of their Conversion;
 yet 'tis very probable, that ordinarily few such know
 it. — And very observable to our present Purpose are
 the Words of pious Mr. Baxter †, ' I was once, says he,
 in a Meeting of very many Christians, most eminent for
 Zeal and Holiness of most in the Land, of whom divers
 were Ministers, (and some at this Day as famous and
 much followed as any I know in England) and it was
 there desired, that every one should give in the manner
 of their Conversion, that it might be observed what was
 God's ordinary way: And there was but one that I re-
 member of them all, that could conjecture at the Time
 of their Conversion.

Don't trouble yourselves therefore with Fears and Doubts
 about your Conversion, merely because you can't relate the
 Time and Circumstances of it, with that Particularity and
 Exactness which some others may be able to do. Search
 your Hearts thorowly, to see whether you are indeed Posses-
 sors of a new Nature; that's the main thing: The Time
 when this new Nature was form'd in you, is a Circumstance
 only; get well satisfied about the former, and you need
 in no Concern about the latter.

But I han't Assurance, says the doubting Christian; that's
 another great Discouragement to me: One and another, who
 have but lately made any Pretences to Religion, seem to be
 certain of their Salvation; they have no Doubt about their good-
 ness.

† In his Book about Infant Baptism, p. 129,

state, but have arrived, as it were, all at once, to full Assurance. This is not my Case, though it be a long time since, I hope, I have been in earnest about Religion, and my Soul's Salvation, and it gives me no small Disturbance. To give you Relief under this Difficulty, let me say, though Assurance be attainable, yet however it comes about, or wherever the Fault lies, 'tis the Attainment of but few; and the Experience of the greatest part of true Christians is sad Proof of this. Hear what holy Mr. Baxter says upon his Head, 'Even of those that live comfortably, and in Peace of Conscience, yet very few of them do attain to a Certainty: For my part, 'tis known that God, in undeserved Mercy, hath given me long the Society of a great Number of godly People, and great Interest in them, and Privacy with them, and Opportunity to know their Minds; and this in many Places, (my Station in Providence having been oft removed) and I must needs profess, that of all these, I have met with few, very few indeed, that, if seriously and privately asked them, *Are you certain you are a true Believer, and so are justified and shall be saved,* must say to me, *I am certain of it:* But some, in great Doubts and Fears, most too secure and neglective of their States without Assurance, and some in so good Hope (to speak in their own Language) as calmeth their Spirits, that they can comfortably cast themselves on GOD in Christ: And those few, who have gone so far beyond all the rest as to say, they were *certain of their Salvation,* were the Professors whose State I suspected more than any of the rest, as being the most proud, self-conceited, censorious unpeaceable Professors.' And having again asserted it for Truth, that but few Christians reach to Assurance of Salvation, he thereupon adds †, 'I come not to be of this Mind meerly by reading of Books, but mainly by reading my own Heart, and consulting my own Experience, and the Experience of a very great Number of godly People of all sorts who have opened their Hearts to me for almost twenty Years time.' He further goes on, 'I would intreat the Gain-sayers to study their own Hearts better for some considerable Time, and to be more in hearing the Case and Complaints of godly People, and by that time they may happily come to be of my Mind. See also) whether all those Divines that have been very pra-

* *etical and successful in the Work of God, and much acquainted with the Way of the Recovery of lost Souls, but not all of the same Judgment as I in this Point, such as T. Hooker, Jo. Rogers, Preston, Sibbs, Bolton, Dod, Cawverwell, &c.*

It is not the Design of this pious Writer to speak against Assurance; or to discourage Persons from their best Endeavours in the use of all Means, that they may make *their Calling and Election sure*; no, but that they may not look upon that to be an Attainment so essential, as that without it they can not be real Christians. Do what you can, my Brethren, to be as sure of Salvation as possible; 'twill be a Source of unspeakable Comfort to you, in all the various Periods, and under all the various Trials of Life; nor will it be a good Sign upon you, if you are content to go on in Uncertainty about your everlasting Well-being; yet, don't suffer it to put you upon giving up all Hope of your being in a good State, if you should not come to that Assurance which some others may pretend to; you may notwithstanding be real Christians new Creatures.

But I han't had Experience of that Light and Joy in the Lord, which I hear of in others; my Soul han't felt those Raptures of Delight and Comfort, which is the Case of one and another I converse with; and it puts me upon questioning the Goodness of my State; I am afraid I have not been savingly brought home to God in Christ.

The Advice of Mr. Baxter to Persons in your Circumstances is that †, * Be thankful, if you can but reach to a settled Peace and Composure of your Mind, and lay not too much on the high Raptures and Feelings of Comfort which some possess. — Let me tell you two or three things: (1.) A settled Calm and Peace of Soul is a great Mercy and not to be undervalued, and looked at as nothing. (2.) The highest Raptures and passionate feeling Joys, are usually of most doubtful Sincerity. Not that I would have any suspect the Sincerity of them without Cause; but such Passions are not so certain Signs of Grace, as the settled Frame of the Understanding and Will: Nor can we easily know that they are of the Spirit; and they are liable to more questioning, and have in them a greater Possibility of Deceit. Doubtless it is very much that Fancy and Melancholy, and especially a natural Weakness and move-

† Vol. II. of his Works, p. 372.

able Temper will do in such Cases:— Yet, I doubt not but solid Men have oft high Joys; and more we might all have if we did our Duty. And I would have no Christian content himself with a dull Quietness of Spirit, but, by all means possible, to be labouring to rejoice in God, and raising their Souls to heavenly Delights. O what Lives do we lose which we might enjoy! But my Meaning is this; look at these Joys and Delights as Duties and as Mercies; but look not at them as Marks of Trial, so as to place more Necessity in them than God has done, or to think them to be ordinary Things. If you do but feel such an high Estimation of Christ and Heaven, that you would not leave him for all the World, take this for your surest Sign. And if you have but so much Probability or Hope of your Interest in him, that you can think of God as one that loveth you, and are gladder of these Hopes of your Interest in Christ and Glory, than if you were Owner of all the World, take this for a happy Mercy, and a high Consolation. To all which let me add, There is such a thing as Joy, which is no Sign at all, much less a certain one, of the Truth of Grace. Such was the Joy with which the *stony-ground Hearers received the Word* †: It was a sudden Flash only, a meer sensitive Passion; their Heart notwithstanding was, at Bottom as hard as a Stone. And such also was the Delight with which *Ezekiel's Hearers attended to his Preaching*. The Description the Holy Ghost gives of it is that, *And they come unto thee as the People cometh, and they sit before thee as my People, and they hear thy Words; but they will not do them: For with their mouth they shew much Love; but their Heart goeth after their Covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely Song of one that hath a pleasant Voice, and can play well on an Instrument: For they hear thy Words, but they do them not* †. And this, no doubt, is the only Joy of many others; and the Joy is always of this sort, when it is not accompanied with a real sanctifying Work of the Holy Spirit. I speak not thus to discourage any, but to put all upon due Fear and Caution: For the Truth of the Case is plainly this, unless you have had wrought in you that Change, which consists in the Renovation of your Soul, and the Implantation of God's Image, the highest Raptures of Joy and Delight are no Evidence that you are in a good State: Where-

† Matth. xiii. 20, 21. † Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32.

as, if you are enabled to discern this Change effected in you, you may certainly depend upon it, that you are in Christ Jesus, and have passed from Death to Life; and though you should not know what that Joy means, which others speak so much of.

But 'tis more than time that I come,

5. In the last Place, to speak a Word to those, who may be thought to be new Creatures. Some such, we charitably believe there are among us. O that their Number were greater! The good Lord increase it. To such let me say,

Be thankful to God, to whom it is owing you are what you are. *What hast thou, O Man, O Woman, that thou didst not receive?* 'Twas not by your own Works of Righteousness, but according to his Mercy, that God has saved you by the washing of Regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Often look back to your former State, when you were dead in Trespasses and Sins; and while you remember the sad State you were once in, O admire and adore that God, who is rich in mercy, for his great Love wherewith he loved you, in quickening you together with Christ, and raising you up, and making you sit together with him in heavenly Places.

But suffer me to be particular here, in a few Words of Counsel and Direction, more especially to those, who may have lately come into the State of new Creatures.

And,

1. Think not the Measure of your first Endowments to be greater than it is; but remember you are yet in your Infancy, and must expect Growth and Ripeness as the Consequence of Time and Diligence. Grace imitateth Nature, beginning usually with small Degrees, and growing up to Maturity by leisurely proceeding. We are not new born in a State of Manhood, as Adam was created. At first we are of low Stature: Our true Description is that, * *New-born Babes, desiring the sincere Milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby.* 'Tis observable, the New-birth brings forth but Babes; Growth is by Degrees, by feeding on the Word. The Word is received by the Heart, as Seed into the Ground, *Matth. xiii.* and Seed useth not to bring forth Blade and Fruit in a Day.

Not but that some Men (as Paul) may have more Growth at their first Conversion than many others have at their first

* 1 Pet. ii. 2.

Growth; for God is free in giving of his own, and may give more or less as pleaseth himself: But yet in *Paul* himself, that greater Measure is but his smallest Measure; and he himself is capable of Increase to the last; though so great Measure at first is as rare, as his greater Measure at last in his full Growth, and scarce to be expected now.

Or, if it should please God to bestow upon any now (as possibly he may) a great Measure of Holiness at first, yet the Measure of Gifts will not, at first, be great, unless acquired or received before Conversion. If Grace find a Man of great Parts and Understanding, which by Study and other helps he had attained before, no Wonder if that Man, when his Parts are sanctified, be able in Knowledge the first Day: or he had it before, though he had not a Heart to use it: but if Grace find a Man ignorant, unlearned, and of mean abilities, he must not expect to be suddenly lifted up to great Understanding, and high Degrees of Knowledge by Infusion: For this Knowledge is not given now by sudden Infusion, as Gifts were extraordinarily in the primitive Church. And you need no other Proof of this but Experience, to stop the Mouth of any Gain-sayer. Look about you, and observe, whether those that are Men of Knowledge, did obtain it by Infusion in a Moment? or whether they did not obtain it by diligent Study, by slow Degrees. Name the Man that ever came to great Understanding in any other way.

This is an important Direction, and the not observing it may be attended with sad Effects; which I will just name, that you may see the Necessity of avoiding them.

If you imagine you are presently Men of great Understanding and Abilities, and Holiness, while you are young Beginners, and but new-born Babes, you are entering into the snare and Condemnation of the Devil; even into the odious Sin of Pride; yea, a Pride of those spiritual Gifts, which are most contrary to Pride. Mark the Words of *Paul*, when he forbids to chuse a young Beginner to the Ministry, *Not a Novice* (that is a young raw Christian) *lest being lifted up* (or besotted) *with Pride, he fall into the condemnation of the Devil*. Why are young Beginners more in danger of this than other Christians? One would think in Infancy should be conscious of its own Infirmitie. But *Paul* knew what he said: 'Tis partly, because the

Suddenness of their Change, coming out of Darkness into Light which they never saw before, doth amaze them, and transport them, and make them think they are almost in Heaven, and that there is not much more to be attained. And it is partly, because they have not Knowledge enough to know how many things there are that yet they are ignorant of. They never heard of the Scripture-difficulties, and the Knots in School-divinity, nor the hard Cases of Conscience; whereas one seven Years painful Studies, will teach them of many hundred Difficulties which they never saw, and forty or fifty Years Study more, will cloath them with Shame and Humility, in the Sense of their lamentable Darkness.

Your overvaluing your first Grace and Knowledge will also bring on a Neglect of that Labour, and Pains, and Patience in the Use of Means which are necessary for your Growth and Increase: And so you will be in the State of those, who are ever learning, and never come to any ripeness of Knowledge: You will have an Opinion of yourselves, as if you were to be Teachers, when you have need to be taught yourselves. And when, *for the Time ye ought to have been Teachers, you will have need to be taught again, which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God.*

This hasty Conceit of your own Goodness and Ability will likewise make you presumptuous of your own Strength, and too ready to venture upon dangerous Temptations;— it will make you too secure, when your Souls have need of holy Awfulness and Care, to work out your Salvation;— it will tempt you to run into Controversies, and Matters you are not fit for;— it will make you over confident and trusting in all your Conceits;— censorious of others;— unreachable, despising those who should instruct you: You will think yourselves wiser than your Teachers, though but in the lowest Form. It is such that *James* speaks to *My Brethren* (*be not many Masters (or Teachers) knowing that you shall receive the greater Condemnation.*

I have named to you these, which are but some of the sad Effects of over-valuing your Beginnings in Religion, that as you love your Souls, you may avoid them. I take it says good Mr. *Baxter*, (whose Words I have mostly used) under this Head †, to be a Matter of exceeding great Ma-

* Chap. iii. 1. † See his Works, Vol. I. p. 32, 33.

ment for your Safety and Perseverance, that while you are Infants in Grace, you know your selves to be such; that you may keep your Form, and learn first the Lessons that must first be learnt'.-----

2. See to it, that you beware of Spiritual Pride; some Touches you had upon this under the former Head, but I must be more particular; and the rather, because this is not only a Sin infinitely hateful to God, as well as Man, but a Sin that is too common, more especially among the Beginners in Religion. It may seem strange, but 'tis too notorious a Truth, that the very Persons who can cry out of their own Unworthiness, and confess themselves the vilest and greatest Sinners, as having had their Eyes open'd to see themselves filthy, wretched, damned Creatures; I say 'tis too true, even of these Persons, that in many Instances, they discover too much Pride. I beseech you in the Name of the great God of Heaven, as you value his Favour and dread his Displeasure, to beware of this Sin. O take heed to your selves, that you be not puffed up with a vain Conceit of your own superior Sanctity; this you may be in Danger of:-----Be constantly upon your Guard, watching against all Temptations hereto. *Think lowly of yourselves*, while you *think highly of others*, and *prefer them in love*; and while you think of yourselves as righteous, don't despise others. This is the very Temper of the old *Pharisees*, their most discriminating Mark; their Motto is inscribed by our Saviour, on a Parable he purposely fram'd for them, in those reproachful Words, *Certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others* *. Don't suffer yourselves to be betray'd into any thing that may look like this Vanity of the *Pharisees*: Confine not the Grace of God to yourselves, as though none were Partakers of it but those who have felt your Experiences; look upon the Divine Spirit as sovereign in the Kingdom of Grace, and realize that he may dispense the Grace of God, as to whom he will, so where he will, and in what way or manner soever he will. Remember those Words of our Saviour, and often employ your serious Thoughts on them †, *The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit*.

3. Take care to keep your Zeal under the Government

* Luke xiii. 6, † John iii. 8.

of sound Judgment. None (commonly) more zealous than young Converts, and yet none more apt to be carried away with a Zeal without Knowledge. 'Tis good, my Brethren, to be zealously affected, but it must always be in a good matter, and in due Manner and Measure. You may do a great deal of Hurt by an unadvised Zeal, cast a Blemish on your Profession, lay a Stumbling-block before others, bring Religion into Contempt, and make the Ungodly entertain an Opinion of the Religious, as a Set of Men transported beyond the Bounds of sober Reason. Let your Zeal then be ever tempered with Prudence, and conducted by a well informed Judgment; don't suffer yourselves, at any time, or upon any Occasion, if possible, to be so carried beyond yourselves, as to forget the known, undoubted Laws of God, or to break through your Obligations to them. Ever bear it in Mind that there is a false Zeal as well as a true one; and depend upon it, that is a false Zeal, which contends for some Truths at the Expence of others as great; which contends for the Observance of some Duties, to the neglect of others of as much Importance. There is a glorious Harmony between all the Truths, and all the Duties of Religion; and where the Zeal of Christians is a sober, well governed Fervour, it is concerned for all Truth, and for all Duty, but in due Proportion, being hottest in the greatest things and coolest in the least; and in due Order, wisely subordinating one Truth and Duty to another, according to the Place they bear in the Scheme of Religion. And let me add here, true Christian Zeal is never bitter; it never puts Men upon treating their Brother with Noise and Clamour; that is always the Character of a Zeal according to the Mind of Christ, *it is first pure, then perceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.*

4. Keep up in your Minds a constant Sense of the vast Importance of true Christian Charity. By this I mean not to recommend to you Lukewarmness in Religion, an Indifference to the Truths or Ways of Christianity; much less would I put you upon thinking, that all that call themselves Christians, are either *sound in the faith*, or of a *good conversation in Christ*; I mean not by the Charity I recommend any thing of this Nature, no, but that Christian Love, which harbours no Ill-will, no evil surmisings, no ungrounded Suspicions and Jealousies; that Love which taketh up no evil Report to the Damage of its Neighbour, judges him not, censures him not, condemns him not, but from clear Evidences

silence upon full Enquiry; that Love which speaks no Evil of
 another, neither falsely, nor yet needlessly, whispers not,
 backbiteth not, nor dealeth in open Slander and Reproach;
 that Love, in one word, which *hopeth all things, believeth*
all things, is kind, and tender, and pitiful, apt to put the
 best Constructions upon every thing; yea, to make all those
 Allowances in favour of a Christian Brother, which there is
 Reason to think the good and merciful God will himself do,
 at the great and last Judgment; at which awful Time, what
 alas! will become of us all, if our most compassionate
 Judge don't make ten thousand Times more and greater Al-
 lowances in our favour, than we are ready to do in favour
 of our Christian Friends and Neighbours? This, my Bre-
 thren, is that Charity I would recommend to you; and I
 would be the more earnest in pressing it upon you, as this
 Grace is particularly, and expressly ranked in Scripture among
 the Fruits of the Spirit of God, †; yea, 'tis represented as
 so inseparable an Effect of true Faith ‡, that if it works not
 by *this Love*, 'tis not really Faith, but only a vain Pretence
 to it: And of this we may be as clearly satisfied, if we
 won't shut our Eyes against the Light, as of any one Truth
 in the whole Revelation of God. How far a Man may,
 through the Frailty and Imperfection common to the *san-*
tified in Christ, fall into those Sins, which are contrary to
 this Love, I presume not to say; but this I must say, and
 shall not be faithful to God and Christ and your Souls if I
 don't say it, that this *law of brotherly love is like unto the*
first, and is the greatest law of all, which commands us to
 love God: 'Tis like it in real Weight, yea of absolute and
 indispensable Necessity; and 'tis accordingly every where in-
 culcated as such by Christ and his Apostles: How particular,
 and solemn, and frequently repeated, are the Commands
 of our great Saviour, respecting this Duty of Charity? has
 he not said, * *Judge not, that ye be not judged? Condemn*
not, that ye be not condemned. ** *This is my command-*
ment, that ye love one another. †† *A new commandment*
give I unto you, that ye love one another. And are not the
 like Commands frequently urged by the Apostles of our
 Lord? The Epistles of John are almost a continued Repeti-
 tion of *this commandment of God, to love one another*: And
 with what Strength of Language, in what bold Figures, does

† Gal. v. 22. † Verse 6. * Mat. vii. 1. †† Luke vi. 27.

** John xv. 12. †† John xiii. 34.

the inspired Paul declare the absolute Insufficiency of every thing in order to Salvation, where there is not this Charity. || *Though I speak, says he, with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal: And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. And can you after this maintain in your Minds too constant a Sense of the Importance and Necessity of Charity? Look upon it as a fundamental Grace, for so it really is, and allow yourselves in nothing that may bring it in question either with yourselves or others, whether you are possessed of it; let it be visible that you are Men of Charity; by this let all men know that you are the disciples of Christ; let Love to your Christian Brethren be your distinguishing Badge and Character.*

5. See to it that you know your own *Station, and act within your own Sphere. * Every Spirit, says Mr. Baxter, that is against Order, and is a Friend to Confusion, is against Christ, and is none of the Spirit of Christ; for God is not the God of Confusion, but of Peace, and commandeth that all things be done in order †, and hath established an Order among Angels, Men, Brutes and Inanimates: yea some among the Devils themselves. To which let me add, Shall the Church of God only be without Order? What saith the Scripture? † Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? No, my brethren: God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, then prophets and teachers **. Let Ministers then act in their Place, and do all the Good they can as Ministers, and let private Men keep within their Line and do what Good they can in that; but let them not step into another's Station, and do the Work that is proper to him; remember the Exhortation of the Apostle, †† Study to be quiet, and to do your own business. And again, †† Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. That is the Character the inspired Paul gives us of some

|| 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 3. * See his Works, Vol. 2. Page 276. † 1 Cor. xiv. 33. ‡ 1 Cor. xii. 29. ** Verse 28. †† 1 Thess. iv. 11. †† 1 Cor. vii. 19.

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